

Accident Investigation (Safety) Board Responsibilities

Outline

- **Board President**
- **Recorder**
- **Maintenance Officer**
- **Medical Officer**
- **Other Board Members**
- **Advisors to the Board**
- **Criminal Investigation Division (CID)**
- **The Media**
- **The Collateral Board**

Board President

The duties and responsibilities of the president of an accident investigation board include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Manage the investigation IAW AR 385-40.**
- **Convene the board at the earliest possible time after notification that an accident is to be investigated.**
- **Organize the board and assign areas of investigative responsibility to each member.**
- **Take control of the accident site after the area is declared safe for entry by rescue, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), chemical, and firefighting personnel.**
- **Verify that adequate guards are on site to ensure the preservation and protection of evidence, to include site, equipment, separated parts, impact scars, etc., resulting from the accident.**

Board President

- Coordinate for all required investigating equipment necessary to conduct the investigation.
- Dispatch members of the board to perform their duties and responsibilities.
- Evaluate the need for and request additional technical assistance as required.
- Ensure all available pertinent data is gathered before closing the field portion of the investigation.
- After coordination with the collateral board, authorize recovery of the wreckage from the accident site when the field examination is complete. Release wreckage/equipment for disposition to the owning organization when the investigation is completed.

Board President

- **Conduct frequent meetings of the board to ascertain progress, exchange information, and adjust assignments as necessary.**
- **Ensure accident information is released only to appropriate authorities (i.e., appropriate command, staff, safety and CRC personnel).**
- **Submit daily updates to the local safety office or CRC Operations (as appropriate) during the field investigation. The format is provided in Appendix J of the Accident Investigator's Handbook.**
- **Advise appropriate safety officer/public affairs officer to contact local legal advisors in cases involving potential claims against the U.S. Government for personal injury or property damage.**
- **Ensure data is correctly analyzed and conclusions are supported by evidence.**
- **Ensure suitable recommendations are made and that a**

Board President

- **If applicable, coordinate with the local Criminal Investigation Division (CID) handling the case.**
- **Write the history of flight/event, analysis, findings and recommendations for the technical report.**

Recorder

Recorders should be trained in Army safety accident investigation techniques and procedures (conducted or approved by CRC). The responsibilities and duties of the recorder are as follows:

- **Receive and administratively process information gathered by the members of the board (see example of record sheet in Appendix K of the Accident Investigator's Handbook).**
- **Monitor report processing requirements and stages of completion.**
- **Assign tasks and monitor work of supporting clerical personnel.**
- **Ensure all necessary substantiating data are collected and posted to the technical report.**
- **Assemble the final technical report.**
- **Ensure the human, materiel, and/or environmental narrative of the technical report is complete.**
- **Perform other duties as assigned by the board president.**

Maintenance Officer

When possible, a maintenance specialist should be assigned to the board. The responsibilities and duties of the maintenance member(s) are as follows:

- **Evaluate all maintenance forms/records to determine the pre-accident status of the equipment.**
- **Determine if equipment failed and could have contributed to or caused the accident.**
- **Research equipment records for adequacy of inspections and correction of discrepancies. Determine if discrepancies existed that may have caused or contributed to the accident.**
- **Supervise preparation and shipment of items selected for teardown/analysis (see Appendix L of the Accident Investigator's Handbook).**

Maintenance Officer

- **Monitor equipment recovery if accomplished before completion of the investigation.**
- **Review unit's maintenance procedures and record discrepancies.**
- **Ensure all maintenance/materiel factor requirements for the technical report are complete.**
- **Assist with the preparation of accident scene diagram(s).**
- **Write the materiel factors narrative for the technical report.**
- **Perform other duties as assigned by the board president.**

Medical Officer

The responsibilities and duties of the medical officer board member are as follows:

- **Lead the medical, physiological, and psychological analysis of the human factors investigation.** AR 40-21 (Medical Aspects of Army Aircraft Accident Investigation), AR 40-2, (Army Medical Treatment Facilities General Administration) and appropriate chapters of this handbook govern the investigation and reporting of these factors.
- **Evaluate accident survival, emergency egress, and rescue portions of the human factors investigations.**
- **Ensure the board is advised of medical/human factors related to the cause(s) of the accident, the reason therefore, and recommendations for corrective action.**

Medical Officer

- In case of off-post accidents or where local coroners/medical examiners are involved, promptly recover the remains for autopsy (if applicable), specimen collection, records, etc. (see Appendix M).
- Investigate and report data concerning personnel injuries.
- Collect and evaluate life support equipment (LSE), and personal protective clothing and equipment (PCE).
- Ensure the human factors narrative for the technical report is complete.
- Determine the medical qualification/status of the personnel involved and rescue personnel.
- Perform other duties as assigned by the board president.

Other Board Members

They should consist of individuals who have considerable knowledge and expertise in the required fields (instructor pilot, master, senior, or equipment operator, etc.) The duties of other board members are as assigned by the board president. Other duties are, but not limited to the following:

- **Examine and record all factors involving operations of the equipment, to include assignment of personnel, mission planning, and the history of events from mission assignment to the time the accident occurred.**
- **Investigate and record the status of personnel/ individual training, experience, operating regulation, instructions, and unit directives. Recommend and prepare changes to ARs and TMs, if required.**
- **Investigate the activities of all personnel who were victims, had an influence on the mission, or played a role in the accident.**

Other Board Members

- Prepare a sketch of the accident site (see Appendix N of the Accident Investigator's Handbook).
- Conduct and summarize witness interviews as necessary for inclusion in the technical accident report.
- Assist with the writing of the technical report as required.

Advisors to the Board

- In many cases, the board may require specialized technical assistance not available through standard Army channels. For example, representatives of the equipment manufacturer can provide access to engineering data, historical performance data and other information that would not otherwise be available to the board. Requests for technical assistance should be made through US Army Combat Readiness Center operations; (334) 255-2660/3410 or DSN 558-XXXX.
- It is important to understand the reasons that manufacturers provide representatives, at their own expense, to the board. First, some companies are contractually obligated to support accident investigations. Second, in the event of a materiel failure, first-hand knowledge gained during the on-site investigation is important in developing timely remedial actions to correct the problems. Last, that same knowledge may be important to them for liability issues.

Advisors to the Board

- **Advisors are not voting members of the board. The board president must exercise discretion with reference to the type of information shared with advisors.**
- **As a general rule, advisors are not allowed to participate in witness interviews. Remember that a manufacturer's representative is not bound by Army Regulations regarding promises of confidentiality. Therefore, manufacturer's representatives, and anyone else not bound by Army Regulations regarding promises of confidentiality, are not permitted in interviews where promises of confidentiality are granted. If the advisor has specific questions for the crew or operator that is deemed necessary to determine equipment functionality, then a board member may ask that question for him during the interview.**

Criminal Investigation Division

- Contact with the local CID office should be made as soon as practical. Determine if the CID has assumed criminal investigative authority over the accident scene, initiated an investigation, removed any evidence, or completed/terminated its investigation of the accident site. The CID should determine as quickly as possible if a crime has been committed. If evidence indicates that the event was the result of criminal intent the criminal investigation takes priority over all other investigations, and the safety investigation will be discontinued. Criminal intent does not include negligence, dereliction of duty, or disobedience of an order.
- After CID determines criminal activity is not a factor, they will release control of the investigation to the accident investigation board. In the interim, both investigations may proceed and the CID and the accident investigation board will cooperate with one another in order to ensure that each is able to effectively perform its mission. Information gained in the CID investigation can be released to, and used by, the accident investigation board. CID will, for example, provide the accident investigation board with copies of their report, to include witness statements, photographs, etc. However, the

The Media

The level of media interest will vary depending on the severity of the accident. It may range from no interest at all to concentrated national attention. The appropriate course of action is to allow the installation or the nearest local public affairs officer to address media requests. If a PAO is not immediately available, the board president may be required to interface with the press at the accident scene. The following guidelines will govern the president's handling of the media:

- **Cooperate with the media to the extent possible.**
- **Attempt to defer all questions the local PAO or Commander**
- **If directed to speak with the media, the board president will be the sole interface. Board members will refer any requests for information to the board president.**

The Media

- Provide only uncontested facts (i.e. type aircraft, number on board, and discuss the investigation process, etc.) Do not speculate as to the cause of the accident. The following statement is all that should be provided:

“An investigation of this accident is now ongoing; please refer all of your requests for information to the local installation, US Army Combat Readiness Center, or Department of the Army Public Affairs Office.”

NOTE: Give name and number of local PAO; if not known, be courteous and get the name and number for the reporter. This will show good faith and an attempt to be as helpful as allowed within the scope of the mission and regulations. If you can't get access to local PAO information, give the name and number of the US Army Combat Readiness Center or Department of the Army Public Affairs Office to the reporter (US Army Combat Readiness Center: Public Affairs Office, 334-255-2919; Department of the Army Public Affairs Office: Media Relations Division, 703-697-7550).

The Media

- In most cases, news reporters will understand that it is too early in the investigation to determine what happened and that accident investigators will not speculate about the cause of the accident. Without giving the appearance of trying to conceal anything or pass questions off lightly, the board president should advise reporters that the post or local PAO is the point-of-contact for responding to all of their future questions.
- Accident investigation boards are not authorized to provide periodic updates in the form of news releases or press conferences to either media representatives or local PAOs. Board presidents should ask PAOs to seek information or updates from other sources. A good source of information is the collateral investigation board since their primary purpose is to provide a means of answering the public's concerns regarding the accident.

The Media

- **No attempt should be made to tell reporters what should be written in their stories or to restrict them from interviewing civilian witnesses. You should, however, advise military personnel against making statements, expressing opinions, or giving out information concerning the accident.**
- **In many instances, the news reporters are able to provide a great deal more information than they receive. Sometimes reporters are among the first persons to arrive at the accident site, and they may have talked to several witnesses before the rescue party arrives. This fact may not be apparent from their conversations, which probably will consist primarily of questions. Rather than strain relations at an accident scene by quoting regulations as the reason why you cannot provide reporters with accident details, attempt to be cordial and helpful, yet firmly refer reporters to a public affairs officer. Remember you may find it necessary later to interview the reporter as well.**

The Media

- In most cases, the reporters will be happy to pass their information along to the individual in charge of the accident scene and give the investigation team further assistance as needed if they understand the value of their efforts to the safety program. If the news agency is asked to provide photos or film clips, be advised that a fee will usually be involved, so arrangements for financing should be made before making this kind of request for assistance. The same caution applies to other non-military agencies (police, fire departments, etc.).
- When an accident occurs on non-military property, media personnel should be allowed complete freedom in taking photographs from outside the secured area. If classified material is involved, the photographer should be advised of such. If necessary, the photographer may further be advised that the photographing of classified material may constitute a violation of Federal law (18 U.S. Code, Sections 793d, 793e, 796 and 797). Any such classified material should be either covered or removed before photographs are taken. Although no restriction is placed on the photographer, a tactful request will usually prevent use of photos that would violate propriety. Media personnel should also be advised that the notification of next-of-kin may not have been accomplished.

Collateral Board

It is to everyone's benefit that the board president cooperate with the collateral board to the maximum extent possible. They also have an important mission to accomplish and require timely access to all appropriate information. Safety investigators must ensure that all appropriate data is shared with the collateral board in an expeditious manner (see Appendix O of the Accident Investigator's Handbook for specific instruction on what information is releasable and a memorandum {pg O-3} that can be given to the collateral board explaining the Department of the Army (DA) position on this matter). The collateral board, likewise, is obligated to share any information (which includes any pertinent analysis) with the safety board.

Collateral Board

- Collateral investigations are used to make a record of the facts for use in litigation, claims, and other administrative and disciplinary actions, whereas the safety investigation (hereafter referred to as the accident investigation) is conducted solely for accident prevention purposes.
- Collateral investigations are conducted independently and apart from the accident investigation. They are appointed and conducted by local commands as required by Department of Defense Instruction (DODI) 6055.7 and AR 385-40, and use procedures in AR 15-6 and AR 27-20.
- Safety personnel do not conduct, review, or store collateral investigations. Note: Safety accident investigation personnel can review data collected by the collateral investigation as part of the safety accident investigation process, however, they cannot be part of the reviewing process for the approval of the collateral investigation.

Collateral Board

Accident and criminal investigations take priority over collateral investigations for purposes of access to evidence, witnesses, and the accident scene; however, a spirit of cooperation is also required to ensure that the collateral board will have equal access to the evidence.

Collateral Board

The accident investigation board may only provide the collateral investigator with copies of common source, factual information (technical data, maintenance records, photographs, maps, diagrams, lists of witness names, etc.). The content of witness statements or summaries may NOT be provided; nor may the accident board provide its analysis, findings, and recommendations or other privileged information to the collateral investigator. The accident board will allow the collateral board a reasonable amount of time to perform an accident scene investigation before disturbing the evidence (by movement, disassembly, etc.). If this cannot be accomplished due to the urgency of the situation, then the accident board must ensure that the scene is documented with photographs and a wreckage distribution (accident site) diagram (Appendix Q of the Accident Investigator's Handbook), which will be made available to the collateral board. If the accident board removes components for analysis, the collateral board

Questions?

Call the US Army Combat Readiness Center
(formally U.S. Army Safety Center) at:

- Ground Investigation DSN 558-2256
- Aviation Investigations DSN 558-3493